

**Key findings for further education colleges
based on evidence from the evaluation of the ICT Test Bed
Project**

Contents

The ICT Test Bed Project	3
Methodology.....	3
Key findings for the Further Education (FE) sector	4
Cross-sector collaboration.....	4

The ICT Test Bed Project

The ICT Test Bed Project (2002-06) was initiated by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) to explore how ICT can be used to support the Government's wider agenda for education reform. The project took a holistic approach to ICT implementation in three ICT Test Bed areas of relative socio-economic deprivation. A total of £34 million was invested over four years, which gave the 28 ICT Test Bed schools and three FE colleges access to very high levels of ICT hardware and appropriate software. The funding also provided for investment in staffing release and training support to make the most effective use of this investment. ICT Test Bed work focused on using ICT to:

- raise standards and performance, especially in the areas of school and college improvement, student attainment, and raising the quality of teaching and learning
- enable more effective leadership and management in schools and colleges
- help teachers to concentrate their time on their core task of teaching
- enable more effective collaboration between schools and their local colleges
- provide wider learning opportunities to students, their families and the wider community in a home environment.

All three ICT Test Bed local authorities have high concentrations of deprivation compared to the national average, though manifest in different ways.

Methodology

The ICT Test Bed Evaluation is based on three strands of data collection and analysis:

Quantitative data

- Benchmarking of changes in performance on national tests against matched comparator schools and national averages.
- Modelling of e-maturity to track institutional change over four years.
- Annual surveys of teacher, pupil and parent attitudes and working practices.

Qualitative data

Site visits including classroom observations, interviews with local authority managers, headteachers, teachers, administrative staff, technicians and students, and document analysis.

Action research data

During the project, more than 90 teachers and para-professionals from the ICT Test Bed Project institutions completed 116 action research studies of their innovative work with ICT. 47 of these were written by staff from the FE colleges.

The final summative evaluation reports of all three strands, together with a number of more detailed evaluation reports from the four years of the project listed in Appendix A, will be made available on the ICT Test Bed Evaluation website [www.evaluation.icctestbed.org.uk].

Key findings for the Further Education (FE) sector

These key findings have been drawn from multiple reports authored by the ICT Test Bed Evaluation team.

In each of the three FE colleges, ICT investment was focused in three different departments (none of which was ICT). Findings relate to these specific departments in the main, rather than to the entirety of the colleges. The very small sample size must be borne in mind.

Cross-sector collaboration

Effective cross-sectoral collaboration required a common purpose and leadership from the top

Plenty of time for staff to meet and establish trust needed to be built into the process, with roles and responsibilities clearly identified. Links between the FE colleges and other institutions in the project were established with differing degrees of success according to individual drivers and visions. However, as schools and FE colleges are under different governance, without funding from similar initiatives it is unlikely that such links will continue.